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Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, (H.A.)

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A BRIEF REVIEW OF  
THE ACTION OF LABOUR, PRODUCTION, COMMERCE,  
AND CONSUMPTION, AS AT PRESENT ORGANIZED.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.

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☞ As it has been an object in writing the within pages, to compress as much matter as possible into the smallest space, on the first reading it may seem a little obscure.—But on each successive one, which will require but little more than a leisure hour, it will become more perspicuous, and finally, it is hoped, lead to a clear understanding of a subject which is daily increasing in interest.

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A BRIEF REVIEW  
OF  
THE ACTION  
OF  
LABOUR, PRODUCTION, COMMERCE, AND  
CONSUMPTION,

UNDER THEIR EXISTING FORMS AND PRACTICE; WITH PROPOSED  
EXPEDIENTS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

INTENDED TO PROMOTE A MORE GENERAL AND POPULAR CONVERSATION  
UPON, AND UNDERSTANDING OF, THOSE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1849, in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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SECTION I.—PREFATORY EXPLANATION.

WHENEVER it happens that a company of operatives or *industrials*\* are met together, either in prosecution of their usual employments, or as social and recreative opportunities may happen to congregate them, their conversation, of late years, very frequently turns on the unequal advantages and profits accruing from the various pursuits of the community to the individuals respectively engaged therein; giving evidence that a more enlightened state of the public mind, springing from our greatly extended and improved system of education, added to the profuse out-pourings of the press, have extensively awakened attention to the grievances and ills that pervade and beset all branches of industry and business pursuits, under the existing forms and customs; as also to the more frequently recurring derangements and interruptions to which they have become liable. And, indeed, there can be no wholesomer subject for discussion, if care be taken to aim at a correct research after the causes, and to devise and conclude on sound and sober correctives: for under present tendencies they cannot avoid in time reaching a degree of insupportableness that must eventuate in rational, peaceful rectifications timely applied, that shall produce general, if not universal, plenty, comfort, and enjoy-

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\* There seems to be wanting in the English language a familiar word whereby to signify the general mass or body of those who constantly ply some employment. The term *labourer* has got to imply, almost solely, one who exerts muscular power alone on rude objects without art or science. *Operative*, likewise conveys the idea of one who performs the manual processes in any case; and *Journeyman* the same, in a subordinate capacity. The French use a word which some English writers translate *Industrials*, and which, perhaps, very appropriately supplies the deficiency. When either is used as above, all who pursue some object of industry as a means of livelihood in more or less dependence upon others are intended, as distinguished from independent capitalists, and those who live at leisure upon property incomes.

ment; or else involve all civilized society in such shocking and disastrous collisions between the affluent and the destitute as lately occurred in Paris; until it terminate in, perhaps, some revolting degradation of the condition of man—possibly a return to the feudal, the barbarous, or even the savage state.—However, in our land of free discussion, and freedom of opinion, together with the domination of the will of the majority as ascertained through the ballot-box, the latter result is little to be feared; while it may be confidently expected that the first and more benignant course will be taken and prevail—this country thus again setting the rest of the world an example of wisely improved social economy and institutions, as it already has of true liberty and of a wise and just self-government.

The notice or detection of a grievance is usually accompanied by a suggestion of its origin or cause by those who perceive it: but if this be in any degree questionable or a matter of theory, almost every one will form his own notions and view of it; and, in the vast majority of instances, with but little or no scrutiny of the facts, or justness of deduction from them; they hastily drawing groundless conclusions from some prominent outward appearances. In this case it has been eminently so; and in nine instances out of ten, when the operative or producing member finds himself but scantily rewarded, he is disposed to attribute it to the illiberality of his employer; and fancies that, by a course of remonstrance or coercion, the matter might be amended: whereas, the difficulty arises entirely from errors in our forms, customs, and the rights of individuals and property, which generally impose as much constraint on the employer as on the employed, and will continue gradually progressing to do so, until the causes and their action are properly discerned and understood by all; and all, or a sufficient majority, unite to give them a more beneficent operation. But to make the necessary conversation, discussion, and deliberation interesting and instructive, it is indispensable that at least a portion of the party should have examined and meditated upon the subject in question; which is the only way of acquiring ability to give enlightened or sound opinions, and make judicious suggestions: while at the same time it compares handsomely with the absurd fancies and presumptuous advances of those who have omitted such preparation.—To enable those who desire to possess the one and escape the other position, by the shortest methods, is the object, aim, and hope in offering these pages.

Again—when the operative or producer has but precarious employment, or is for a time wholly destitute of it, he almost invariably charges it, in his branch of industry, to its being overstocked with workmen or apprentices, and sometimes adding the influence of machinery: but in the course of this treatise or review, it will be undertaken to show that this is an entire mistake; and that it is owing to the inevitable result of our usages and methods in production and trade, which disables, at frequent-occurring intervals, a large portion of the population from obtaining and consuming the articles which supply employment, and therefore diminishes employment to that

amount: for if consumption was uniform in quantity, the employment of producing would be uniform also; and if all could liberally partake in consumption, probably the healthful and agreeably moderate employment of all, would not be more than sufficient to produce an adequate supply for all.

Through all history, in proportion to the civilization, science, and refinement that has been attained by any nation, district, or assemblage of people, the difference of advantage and profit accruing to the several individuals concerned in the process or accomplishment of any pursuit necessary to supply natural wants, promote and secure the general welfare, or to furnish comfort and enjoyment, seems to have attracted more or less notice, and a corresponding dissatisfaction with its constant attendance; as also a greater or less amount of inquiry concerning a plan for a more equable apportionment of the benefits flowing from organized industry. These researches, however, through the great oversight of not recurring to *natural principles*, and recollecting that, with only a very few exceptions, all animated beings are, by Creative Wisdom, thrown upon their *independent* individual exertions, respectively, to collect their subsistence from the means bountifully supplied by the Creator, and plainly intended for all, and the exclusion of none but the wilfully indolent or improvident; and neglecting also to remark, that the prevailing customs were an entire departure therefrom, have mostly resulted in the opinion, of one portion, that a better if not entirely satisfactory, condition could be obtained in what is called "*agrarianism*," or a fixed apportionment and ownership of the soil particularly, and measurably of the other means of gratifying their necessities and supplying enjoyments; and of another, in that of "*communism*," or union of labour and property, and the equal right of all to participation in their fruits and gratifications.

These projects, though they have, at various times, had their ingenious, eloquent, and earnest promulgators, from the infancy of world-ruling Rome, to the later days of tottering secular and religious despotisms, and also been put to sundry practical tests, have never resulted in any thing that promised improvement or alleviation; owing, perhaps, to the repelling features, in the one case, of indiscriminately limiting individual capabilities: and in the other, of counteracting that desire of independence in person and action which Nature has almost invariably implanted in her animated productions.

When, however, within these seventy years past, philanthropists, statesmen, and moral philosophers began to discover that *ignorance*, *poverty*, and *crime* invariably walked hand in hand; and that, in general, *wealth*, *power*, *oppression*, and *luxurious depravity* held a like association, continually exhibiting a pernicious, tantalizing example to the other, while *virtue*, *worth*, and *comfort* were the companions of *knowledge*, some of the more benevolent of those orders began to conceive plans for curing the evil by counteracting the cause—cultivating and expanding the mental capabilities, and equalizing the result of industry to those who pursued it.

The first and most promising idea to effect this design has been the project of accomplishing each individual with a sufficiently extended education to comprehend his nature, destiny, and rights, and consequently a general qualification for duly perceiving and pursuing the means best adapted to acquire his personal subsistence and comfort, and feeling happy in his existence: and if ever this condition is universally, or even largely arrived at by man, education, and through it a full perception of the circumstances under which we exist, most assuredly must constitute its foundation. But in proportion as this measure has advanced, (and in some sections of these United States its advance has been unexpectedly great,) another and overwhelming grievance has been along with it more forcibly exposed; and, so far, it may be questioned whether any alleviation of moment has yet ensued, unless a clearer view of where the error lies be so considered.

The child of poverty, on becoming sufficiently endowed with the lights of education, and in that respect qualified to compare himself with his fellow beings, in preparing to enter on the course of industry necessary to subsistence and the enjoyment of life, finds every thing requisite therefor, the natural as well as the artificial, possessed or claimed by his precursors, and in multitudes of instances not only to an hundred times the extent that the comfort and happiness of the possessors require, but even to an injurious effect on their moral behaviour and welfare.—It is true, he is told that the path by which many of those, who are thus favourably situated arrived at their position is open to them also. But the power of capital and prior possession, is so potent in resisting enterprise and industry, that very few, comparatively, let their exertions be what they may, ever succeed in acquiring half their share in the worldly enjoyments which creation so bountifully displays around them, or which their labour contributes to produce. Hence many, with equal, and often superior capabilities to those who thus superabound in wealth, have their sensibilities constantly mortified with the parade of gratifications they may not taste; and in proportion to the expansion of mind by education, their unhappiness is increased: for it an established moral, that poverty or destitution is far less afflictive to the ignorant and rude, than to the intelligent and refined.—Here, also, issues the master-fountain of vice and crime: for those who abandon themselves to them, in far the greater number of instances, are persons who, however willing and desirous to pursue it, are repelled from the more agreeable path of industry, either by want of openings, or insufficient compensation, while those of less, or certainly no greater merit, are gaily flaunting about them in all the luxury and gaudiness of affluence. Hence, through a natural inclination to enjoy, and hopelessness of participating by the means they would prefer, a disposition is engendered to possess them at all hazards, even clandestinely; against which legislators may enact, and divines in vain declaim, until the originating cause is reformed.

These obstacles to the universal, or even general, comfortable and pleasant condition of which society seems capable, have lately at-



tracted much attention, accompanied with various propositions for corrective expedients other than those already mentioned, prominent among which, is what is called "Fourierism," or "Socialism," that has recently so much agitated France, the place of its more modern promulgation and prevalence: but, hitherto, all the experiments that have been made of those different devices have afforded no satisfying result, and most of the enterprises have been ultimately abandoned. Their failure, perhaps, was principally owing to their interference with personal independence and the natural desire for individual accumulation, and disposal thereof at the unrestricted pleasure of the owner, which seems implanted among the desires of every human being.

But that a great improvement in the arrangement of industry—one that shall dispense its benefits to every individual that will avail himself of it, is practicable—nay, must finally be adopted—and that with only a trifling variation from present usages, by simple legislative action, it is a principal object of these pages to assert and demonstrate. In order, however, to effect it, a sufficient majority must first radically understand the source of their evils and the errors that cause them; for until then all attempts at reform will be liable to take an irrational frenzied or fanatic character, affording no hope of relief.

There are two methods by which to accomplish any vast or stupendous human enterprise, though both involve the same principle of *united exertion*. The first, is that of selecting a competent leader or dictator, and then yielding implicit obedience to his orders, and promptly executing his plans—thus pyramids have been built and a world conquered. The second, is that of each individual learning and accurately understanding the object in view, the means by which it is to be effected, and then applying their efforts in concert to perform it—thus nations have freed themselves from despotism, governments been established, and wonders of art performed.

The latter method will unquestionably have to be the course in this republican land; and in the hope of aiding to prepare the public mind for an event that *must* occur, and which by timely anticipation and discreet reforms may have a peaceful advent instead of resulting from disorder and perhaps violence when the evils shall become no longer endurable, it will now be attempted to show how our present systems operate to produce the inconvenience, insufficiency, and frequently even distress which is suffered by so large a portion of every civilized nation, and then submit the remedy they suggest.

## SECTION II.—OPERATIVE EFFECTS.

It will need only the remark to obtain the assent of every person, that *labour* or *equivalent application*, is the most indispensable condition for procuring the things requisite to afford and continue animal existence, and whatever degree of happiness and enjoyment that accompanies it.—This is as apparent in the actions of the bird which flits about in search of the fruits, seeds, or insects that main-

tain its life—or the quadruped that roams for its prey or herbage, as in man, by the care of herds, and the toil of plying the plough, loom, anvil, or other mechanical contrivances, wherewith he produces the articles necessary to his wants; and a little reflection on this condition as imposed on man, must infallibly result in the conviction and admission of sundry plain, indisputable *principles*, *axioms*, or incontrovertible *truths*, arising from the attendant circumstances, however much custom or misapprehension may have led us to overlook or vary them in the pursuit of our welfare; but a full observance and compliance with which will be essential to such a reform and improvement of policy as will make all equal partakers of the good which now only a portion enjoy.—Foremost among such axioms may be advanced the following:—

*Consumption, or the use of adopted and proper articles being the only way in which we can maintain existence, consumption of them must be the grand impulse to the labour of their production: and the greater that consumption, the greater is the motive to produce them, and the greater the amount of labour required to produce the adequate quantity; while, on the contrary, without consumption there would be no use in the labour of production.*

This axiom, it is presumed, is so self-evident as to require no argument for convincing any one of its verity who is of fit age and has common understanding. But perhaps it is the proper place to remark, that the peculiar habits of man—the difference in the climates he inhabits and of consequence the difference in his wants—the greater variety of capacity through his endowment with reason—his foresight, derived from more perfect memory of his experience—have forced upon him usages equally different from those of other animals, though now scarcely less natural, from their intimate combination with those which are positively so; the most peculiar and remarkable of which is the art and practice of mutually exchanging and supplying each other with such articles as each, respectively, may have been trained, or is best qualified to produce; and which has the pleasing advantage of both ease and quickness beyond comparison in producing, and of dispensing to each individual a variety in products that could not be approached by any other system. This method, however, while it so vastly increases dexterity, and of course the power to produce, yet by confining the operative to a narrow department in the creation of those things which education and habit have converted into necessities, his labour becomes an *indirect* although it continues an *indispensable* medium for gratifying his wants: and *this fact*, under the laws, regulations, and *permissions*, that hitherto have, and still do, govern production and exchange, is, next to the power and effects of *unlimited accumulation* by individuals, the principal source whence flows poverty and all its discomforts.—In exemplifying this, a second axiom may first properly be stated.

*As in mathematical elements they say, “the whole is greater than any part;” so in the principles of subsistence, the greatest amount of con-*

*sumption must be found in the full gratification or supply of the whole body capable of consuming: and if labour and consumption mutually generate each other, whatever curtails or expands one, must affect the other in the same way. Consequently, if labour be the only means to enjoy consumption, and consumption alone supplies labour, any curtailment of either must react, and make a double suppression.*

As plain as this position may—perhaps *must* be, to every one who will meditate upon it a few moments, yet not only has it been universally overlooked, but a contrary practice insisted on, as the *only* means for acquiring wealth by all who desire it; when, at the same time, it is the root of all the evil that afflicts the industry, commerce, and general stability and comfort of civilized society, and imposes upon it fluctuation, uncertainty, and, frequently, wide-spread prostration of its most important member—the productive industry—and at all times subjecting the greater part of it to a precarious, or else a very meagre indulgence.—It is truly wonderful, that though its inseparable, unavoidable action is so very clear and indisputable, that the theory on which it rests, commonly, though erroneously, called *economy*,\* *frugality*, &c., should so absurdly have been the incessant laudatory theme of philosophers and moralists in that line in all ages; and, in later times, from the world-renowned though superficial Benjamin Franklin, in his delusive, one-in-a-hundred “Way to Wealth,” or rather, “System of Selfishness,” down to the unpenetrating, purblind paragraphists on the subject in the every-day publications of the present moment. For though the principle may have numerous and glaring examples of its success, and thence its apparent validity, yet a slight examination must convince of its fallacy and incompetence to produce more than a very partial or limited success in favour of a few individuals, and that such success must be at the expense and damage of twenty times their number—leaving out of the question a universal, or even extensive beneficial power of the principle.

It is true, that an individual here and there, taking advantage of the existing state and customs of business affairs, may, by the adoption and practice of a parsimonious self-denial, accumulate a large hoard beyond the requirements of his absolute necessities; and by applying his gains in the manner that prevailing customs allow for abstracting from the fruits and profits of the labour of others, such as *interest*, *rents*, &c. finally secure an enormous amount of wealth; but it must necessarily be at the cost and loss of those who created whatever that wealth consists of, beyond what he, personally, could have created: and hence, on a moderate average of society, it takes at least twenty persons or families to make a wealthy one—or, one wealthy person or family restricts a portion of twenty others to very moderate, and some of them to very narrow circumstances.

\* *Economy*, properly, means the most suitable, expert, and beneficial pursuit or performance of the *intention* of any thing, by rules derived from experience or instruction.—The disposition to hoard and make useless accumulation, is, properly, *avarice*, *covetousness*, or *miserliness*, to which “economy” is very generally misapplied, in mistake of the meaning of the word.

To go into an illustration,—Suppose a determination should arise throughout a whole community, as society is now organized, to extend the benefits of this *saving* or *accumulating* theory to each of its members, and as a first movement therein, it is resolved to go, like savages, without hats, or to substitute one of straw or other rude material which each individual could manufacture for himself, as answering every physical purpose. Here the labour and gains of the hatter, which were the medium for supplying his wants, are suppressed, and he is *compelled* to pursue the plan. He and others, in turn resolve to go without shoes, as thousands do, or use some coarse contrivance in their place:—then the fate of the hatter befalls the shoemaker.—Next, when any sufficient cut and joining of suitable stuff, perhaps even animal skins, is found to be as really serviceable as garments handsomely made of broadcloth, the tailor undergoes the prostrating operation: and thus on with every artizan; until, finding that an earth-thrown hut will adequately shelter them, the architect is superseded. Progressively, along with these, on perceiving that bread, meat, and water will effectually sustain life, and that sugar, tea, coffee, and other foreign productions that enter into the sum of varied enjoyment, may be dispensed with, the merchant follows in the train; and by the time all have adopted their expedients, they will find that every thing which constitutes wealth is expelled, and that they have nothing to employ their labour upon, much less to accumulate with—that while liberal consumption promoted art, knowledge, enjoyment, elegance, and refinement, their *economy*, as it is falsely called, tends to ignorance, barbarism, deprivation, and liability to want, if it should not even result in savageness.

Fortunately, however, the practice of this theory is never adopted so extensively as to produce its *ultra* effects, nor even to its overbalancing capability, or else we could not have the superiority over barbarous and savage life which everywhere surrounds us.—Nevertheless, aided by an effect growing out of it, it influences to the extent that produces those fluctuations and irregularities in the pursuits of industry and commerce, which are becoming more and more frequent; and which must continue so to recur in civilized scientific communities, until their oppressiveness *force* their correction, if it be not previously done by timely foresight and action, as herein before suggested. The *primary* cause of these derangements lies in the fact of the agents and means of production being allowed and conceded to but a few, through the process of accumulation, *without limits* to their extent, and thence follows an overwhelming effect, as above intimated, the operation of which will be taken as the next axiom.

*Concentration of the agents, means, or instruments of production into the possession and control of only a few of those engaged in any particular branch, though it give that few the ability to consume freely, and also accumulate wealth, by abstracting a portion from the real value of each operative's labour, yet it must reduce the amount of labour and con-*

*sumption equal to the amount hoarded, and the curtailment of consumption, in him from whom the abstraction is made.*

Whenever a reflecting person undertakes to scrutinize the *Economy* [in the right meaning of the word] of civilized society, the principle contained in this axiom becomes the most bewildering of all others connected with the subject, as it seems inseparable from men's minds, that *saving* must uniformly create wealth, never recollecting that it deprives the vast majority of *any thing to save*; and this misconception is at the foundation of all the confusion into which statesmen and political economists fall, whenever they undertake to elucidate the nature and operation of production, commerce, and consumption, the existing forms of which, from long-continued custom and habit, have obtained such a specious aspect that it deludes them into the notion, that their antiquity and universal adoption precludes the possibility of their being at fault, in case of any pressing derangement; which, therefore, they assume, must arise from some temporary, though not necessary, cause; hence they resort to such vague conclusions as those of "*over-living*," "*over-production*," "*over-importation*," &c., while the cause is simple and obvious when correctly explored: but it is absolute nonsense to assign either of those in the very face of that *want* and *destitution* which always attends it in exact proportion to the degree of severity of the disorder whenever it occurs from any other cause than that of a failure of the fruits of the earth. It must result, therefore, from the regulations which control the *amount of consumption*, and in which the error of the ruling principle is very great indeed, as it will next be attempted to explain, and which it is so necessary that every one should understand.

The active agent in producing the irregularities in consideration, is the effect of what is commonly called *capital* being possessed only by a few individuals or companies, to the exclusion of many times

expedient until this excess or, properly, *wealth*,\* can be disposed of. But as by existing practice, far the greatest share of this excess accrues to the proprietors of whatever department of production may be taken into consideration; and, consequently, the ability of the subordinate part of them to endure the suspension very unequal to that of the proprietors, whose previous gains enable them to continue consuming, while the continued labour of the others is the only permitted means for their participation in absorbing the store which their industry has created, it must issue in distress to them. This has the effect of constraining the dependant to yield his labour on terms that may induce the proprietor to still further employ his capital in augmenting the stock, or reducing the price to command a market. The operation, however, rather precipitates a similar difficulty, when it is again repeated, until the industrial is reduced to a stipend that will afford but a mere subsistence, which no "*strikes*" or combinations can permanently retrieve, but will more likely tend to aggravate, by inducing the substitution of machinery and other expedients, thus reducing their employment to the lowest amount both in quantity and gain, that will barely maintain life; and converting all the advantage and enjoyment into the hands of those who can obtain the control of the various branches; and whose policy thence becomes, not to calculate how much would be adequate to the comfortable, liberal supply of a certain number or amount of population; but, How much will their restricted labour profitably pay for?

In this view of the subject it might be inferred that the reaction would in its course effect an entire stagnation; but the forms of society admit and require a considerable, nay, large proportion of the population to be extensive consumers, and at the same time non-producers; such are the officers and agents of government; the army and navy; the clerical,† medical, and legal orders; merchants; writers; actors;

household assistants; the portion in childhood and course of education, and the smaller number who are content to retire on a competency. These principally constitute the *balance-wheel* that keeps the machinery in motion; though at present, nor, indeed, ever heretofore, has it been of sufficient power to prevent irregularity, and through the influence of contrivances to supersede manual labour is constantly becoming more impotent. But it is plain, that if all the power of production could be kept only moderately employed, it would furnish an abundant supply to every one; as well as a sufficient accumulation for each, in turn, to repose upon. But in any case it is evident, that the greater the number of consumers and the quantity consumed, on whatever terms, the greater will be the amount of employment, and the access to it, however its pleasures may be alloyed by the unfairness of the labour all accruing to one portion, and the enjoyment to another.—Yet that the whole of a population may be converted into liberal consumers, and, if not the whole, at least ten times the proportion that now do, be enabled to make a reasonable accumulation, it is proposed next to maintain and show.

### SECTION III.—REMEDIAL PROPOSITIONS.

It has of late become a subject of remark and discussion among statesmen and political economists, how the custom and right of unlimited accumulation tends to concentrate both the real estate and money capital of a country into the hands or possession of a comparatively few persons. It is ascertained that, two hundred years ago, there were *four hundred thousand* real estate proprietors in England—at present there is not *thirty thousand*, though the population is now four times as many as it was then.—At the first settlement of Pennsylvania, at least *nine* out of ten were owners of real estate: at present, not more than *one* in ten owns a particle of it, and it is rapidly acquiring a still greater disparity, while each requires the use of some portion of it, and of course becomes tributary to the proprietor.—This in the nature of the fact, reduces the freely qualified consumers to a body, the aggregate of whom are inadequate to absorb, perhaps, the hundredth part of the products the labour of the former country (England) is capable of producing, and measurably so of this; while the great body of the people are disqualified to dispose of one half of the remainder from want of a medium whereby to participate therein; they being restricted to the quantity their labour will command in supplying the other portion: and hence a vast amount of that labour is constantly paralyzed—barely kept from starvation, partly by charity; partly by poor-laws—while the proportion of the destitute to the affluent is daily increasing, and must continue so to increase until it is checked either by prudent forecast or unendurable suffering.—The *ultra* consequences may for a while be retarded by the employment afforded in constructing the *very means* which must finally insure, that result—such as rail-roads, canals, improved machinery, and other labour-saving devices, and, in this country more particularly; the



great quantity of uncultivated land at command—but in all places it must attain its climax; and, in Europe, doubtless it is close at hand.\*

In general, when the *cause* of an evil is correctly ascertained, the *remedy* is almost certain, and sometimes simple and prompt; though often tardy, especially if interest opposes, or time is required to become unanimous or gain a sufficient majority.—If, then, the cause of the evils under consideration, be as above contended, the remedy is plain.—The tendency of property and capital to unreasonable concentration in the right of a few persons must be checked, and the power to consume increased by its wider dispersion.

The question then occurs, How shall this be done?—The idea of “*agrarianism*,” “*socialism*,” &c. has hereinbefore been scouted as, if not futile, at least at variance with the natural predilections of man. The most promising alternative, therefore, it is believed, would consist in letting things remain much as they are, excepting the modifying effects of a few simple acts of legislation, foremost among which must be, the adoption of *A System of Taxation on a Scale of Arithmetical Progression*, the basis of which shall contemplate a liberal consumption by all, and calculated to admit of any one or all, making a reasonable accumulation; but such accumulation to become profitless beyond a certain limit; rendering it then more desirable for the person to remain a retired consumer than troubling himself further, and leave the accumulating power in the hands of those who are aiming at a like condition of affluence and ease.

By *Arithmetical Progression*, all who are conversant with arithmetic will understand, an *increased* proportion of *rate or levy* on an increased *quantity of property* subjected to it.—Thus, using round numbers, suppose the possession of a house of the value of one thousand dollars, being necessary to a man’s own comfortable abode and use, it shall be taxed only to an amount necessary to maintain the government and order of society, say *one dollar*. If, however, his labour and gains enable him to acquire another such house, he obtains the means of abstracting from a fellow citizen a considerable portion of the proceeds of his pursuit, in the shape of *rent*,† whereby to accelerate addition to his own gains and enjoyment, and to retard or diminish both with the other,—let him be taxed, not simply an additional dollar, but *two dollars on each house*, making in all *four dollars*.—Again, he becomes possessed of a *third house*—then *three dollars on each*, making in all *nine dollars*.—Of a fourth, *four dollars on each*, in all *sixteen dollars*. Thus the augmentation of their number would become

\* Three years ago, in a kindred dissertation, the writer of this ventured to predict, that “most of the nations of Europe were then enduring, with a kindly patience, their last monarch,” to whom they would not permit a successor.—Its verification in a much shorter time and way than he anticipated, emboldens him to make the above assertion.

† In cities particularly, perhaps nine tenths of the population are renters, or tenants, each of whom, on the average, surrenders at least one fourth of his gains in this shape; and in many cases to persons who never benefitted society in a single particular, unless their aid in consumption, without aiding in production, be so considered.



profitless beyond an amount which deliberation and experience might fix on as a standard of sufficiency ; though it would no doubt require a greater ratio of increase in taxation to produce a beneficial operation, than that here assumed for its illustration ; unless the aggregate value of a person's property was divided into sums of a thousand dollars each, when, perhaps, it would be rather too great : but a single house in self-use, should not be subjected to more than the lowest rate, whatever its value or cost ; for that supplied labour, and it does not act as a means of abstracting from others :—unless, indeed, it should be shared with others, and converted to that use.

The instance of houses serves more simply and perspicuously to illustrate or exemplify the plan proposed ; but it is equally applicable to all processes whereby one taxes the labour of another.—But in regard to *lands* it is of the most pressing importance, when it is called to mind what an immense proportion is kept from the beneficial use of them designed by the Creator ; who evidently did not form them for, or give them to, any one in particular, further than his own wants and labour could appropriate them ; but intended them for the benefit and sustenance of all whom, in the stream of time, he should see fit to usher into existence endowed with the capacity and necessity for their uses. However, in subjecting them to this regulation, some variation of the considerations would have to be kept in view ; such as the number of children, situation, quality, &c., but for which there are abundance of statistics and other guides whereby to arrive at a just allotment ; or, on failure thereof, no doubt a value system could be brought to bear.

The case of manufactories, in which a levy on the labour of dozens, oftentimes of hundreds, accrue to one, two, three, or more individuals, may, at first glance, seem to present difficulties ; but a little reflection will show that they do not : for, the intelligent and experienced persons to be found among their management could readily show the amount of arrangements, hands, &c. that will make any pursuit valuable, and then proportion a larger one accordingly. This method of taxation, however, would most likely soon resolve all the larger establishments into extensive partnerships, or stock concerns, owned by the operatives ; they receiving of the gains in proportion to the value and quantity of the labour they contribute, and thus, perhaps, originate still larger ones than any that yet exist.\*

*Monied* stock institutions, which, with their *eight hundred millions* of Capital in the United States, annually tax production to a greater

\* It is about two years since this dissertation was projected, and a year since the above was written : but at the moment of putting it in type, the writer observed it stated in the newspapers that the establishment of the New York "Daily Tribune" has been arranged on this plan—a plan which the writer of this proposed, in a small volume on the subject, printed in New York, by the Harpers, twenty-three years ago, and afterwards laboured hard to get an experiment into operation, but without success.—From the known talent and judgment, and long devotion to the examination and consideration of the subject by those connected with the Tribune, it is to be hoped, perhaps may be expected, that, with patience and perseverance, their enterprise will result in a brilliant demonstration of the certainty of success and great benefits of the proceeding ; of the progress of which it is also to be hoped they will keep exact minutes as a guide to others.

amount than the whole revenues of government, if the growing wisdom and discernment of the people do not conclude to entirely abolish, may, however, easily be brought under the operation of such a system in regard to the stockholders; and likewise investments in ground-rents, mortgages, &c. But loose, unproductive funds could not so well be, nor would it be proper that they should; for in that state they abstract nothing from the products of labour, but, on the contrary are a fountain from which they are irrigated, in furnishing the possessor's medium for consumption: and in cases where it may be transiently applied for the benefit or accommodation of another, for a compensation, commonly called discounting or shaving, it seems revolting to the idea of personal independence and right to security and seclusion in such matters, that a scrutiny should be intruded upon any individual for such purposes. To prevent the abuse of such a practice, however, it would be expedient that all such transactions should be thrown beyond the pale of law, by denying *legal* process for the recovery of money in such cases—a policy which seems already to have obtained so much popular favour as to have engaged the attention of a considerable party in some state legislatures.

Similar considerations accompany the indulgence in sumptuous mansions, household furniture, and all personal equipments; for they, instead of abstracting from the *gains* of labour, yield great support to both; and it would, therefore, be much more discreet to tax the labourer than discourage the voluptuary, whose indulgence or enjoyment assists the labourer's gains, and would also enable him to pay the tax. Reason and Nature both, plainly tell us to collect fruit from the fruit that its sources yield; and that to cripple the source itself would be absurd.—So also, to beset with taxation any thing that is necessarily destroyed in serving its uses, as food, clothing, &c., seems unwise, as tending to depress labour by inducing parsimony in using them, further than as it may be politic, as it certainly is, to develope and foster domestic sources for supply, and consequently domestic labour as a medium of consumption, rather than to enrich foreign ones by permitting it to them.

#### SECTION IV.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

AMONG the small proportion of those in society who attain the condition of wealth, by far the most of them (perhaps nineteen in twenty) are inclined to pursue it to an accumulation many times beyond what their most liberal, healthful enjoyment can absorb, or their responsibilities demand. The motives to this are various, the most prominent of which it may serve the object in hand to notice, as showing what silly and absurd reasons are received as sufficient for tolerating so great an amount of evil.

The fewest and most irrational are those called *misers*. Their predilection seems to arise from a simple inherent love of money, without any reference to the delights and gratifications it could purchase; his share of which in this world, he only sees in the idea of possessing

it, and feels in proportion to the quantity he does possess; and thus choking the channels of circulation by consuming as little as possible, he can view unmoved the misery he engenders by his folly of follies.

Another class, few in number, devote themselves to it from a spirit of emulation, like boys trying to roll the largest snow-ball, which has no earthly use; mischievous as the miser, but not so sordid. Both, however, are apt to inflict much evil on society in the debauchery and depravity that almost uniformly ensues in the persons of their heirs.

A few are actuated by ambitious *vanity*, looking to a name of renown by devising their wealth to the erection of public institutions, the beneficent action of which can never repay the damage caused in the collection of their wealth, and the speculation and plunder of it, in its application, by men of *respectable* standing whose—*frailty* it unfolds.

There are many of the number who continue it from *habit*, or from growing *avarice*. Probably at the outset they assigned themselves a station at which to stop—but on arriving there, one finds himself enchained in a habit he cannot forego, and the other so diseased with avarice that it urges him on.

But the grand body of *inordinate* accumulators, invariably give as their excuse, “a provision for the benefit of their children, near relations, or friends:” but no human act ever more uniformly failed of its intention, unless, perhaps, attempts at a *perpetual motion*—so much so indeed, that it looks almost as if Providence frowned on the deed.—Nearly all overgrown fortunes have been constructed by the energy and industry of the owner, from the foundation dollar to the top-stone million; and in nearly as many instances they have been evaporated by and ruined the inheritor, particularly when succeeding at an early age; or if that has not always happened, converted him into an inert, listless sensualist.—Very few indeed; are the cases where it has resulted in any thing useful, honourable, or brilliant compared to their number, or the list on whom it has had an opposite effect. And so great is the disparity, between the evil and the good, that humanity, morality, and religion seem to call for its correction.

In all the expedients and arts of life—that is, obtaining subsistence and enjoyment—and in all plans for effecting the “greatest good to the greatest number,” we will undoubtedly succeed best, and gain most by following *natural principles*; for the Wisdom that instituted them is unerring. We can stimulate and increase the action of those principles by observing and supplying the circumstances under which they thrive best; but the moment we attempt to counteract them, or force them to exist under contrary ones, mischief begins.—We can greatly improve and increase the growth and product of a plant or animal by carefully placing the one, in the best quality of soil and situation that it is noticed to luxuriate in (or making them so); and by abundantly supplying the other with the food, and its changes, and the best kind of harbours that it clearly seems to prefer: but attempt to reverse them and disorder commences.

It is unquestionably a natural principle in some animals to accumulate or hoard; but with them it has a very definite and natural object—a supply of food when it could not otherwise be had: but it

would be very unnatural that any animal, in virtue of having accumulated a hoard, should convert it into an instrument for thenceforth living at the expence of the labour of his fellows; or at least we have no instance thereof except in man, a large part of whose habits and customs are acknowledged to be artificial or perverted.—Accumulation with him, perhaps, is *natural*, so far as its definite object is to provide against a failure of supplies, or the infirmities and incapacities of age; but when it was extended to depredating on his fellow, with a view to release his progeny from the Creative condition of each mature individual providing for itself, it became *unnatural* and perverted, and mischief ensued. The squirrel, nor the bee, do not provide a hoard for their offspring on which they may revel in idleness, and injure their health and vigour by pernicious excesses; nor does any other animal whatever, in the whole round of creation. All carefully nurture them to full-grown capability, and then turn them off to provide for themselves. In consequence they retain their pristine form and adaptation. The squirrel of the present day is the same as that which skipped on the boughs the day of his creation. The bee no ways depreciated from that which gathered honey in the garden of Eden; and the lion as bold and powerful as that which roared upon Samson. No sickly, worthless imbeciles are to be found among them.

Nevertheless, as has been herein advanced, it is deemed possible so to manage, modify, and improve upon the *natural* disposition to accumulate, that it shall not only be divested of its present injustice to others, but made available to all who choose to adopt it, as with the bee and squirrel, and also become a secure reliance, not necessarily liable to be *suddenly* dissipated; while, with the immense mechanical aids and facilities for production already existing, without those constantly coming to light, a sufficient accumulation could probably be made at a comparatively early age: together with the institution of such kindly fashioned resources for the worthy, who might happen to be unfortunate or decrepid, as should be entirely free from the repulsiveness or cost attending those in use.

But what should be the arrangements, regulations, manner, and process for realizing such a condition of things, it is not designed at present to propose or discuss.—First let the benefits and great extension of independent condition, easy circumstances, and suppression of poverty that *restricted accumulation* is capable of effecting be established by proper measures, and then other advantages will force themselves forward, as surely as one scientific or ingenious discovery or improvement, has ever led on and introduced other and greater ones, or been itself expanded, and more extensively, profitably, or beneficially applied.—Wherefore it will be closed for the present with the suggestion, that competent persons who may feel so far interested in the subject, would no doubt be usefully employed in considering and drafting the matter and form of suitable legislative enactments for effecting the contemplated reform, and averting the prospective danger; from whose varied ideas an acceptable one could more likely be compounded.

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